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# The Concept of **GOD** In Major Religions

**By Dr. Zakir Naik**

Designed by: Abdul Hameed



**DARUSSALAM**  
GLOBAL LEADER IN ISLAMIC BOOKS





*In the Name of Allah (God),  
the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the distinguishing features of our civilization is the presence of a large number of religions and ethical systems. Mankind has always sought to understand the reasons for creation and his own place in the scheme of things.

Arnold Toynbee studied the history of man through the ages and put his findings in a monumental work consisting of ten volumes. He summarized that in the history of man, religion stood as the center. In an article in *The Observer* on October 24, 1954 he wrote:

“I have come back at the belief that religion holds the key to the mystery of existence.”

Religion, according to the Oxford Dictionary means; “belief in a superhuman controlling power especially in a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship.”

A common feature of all major religions is the belief in a Universal God or Supreme Divine Authority that is Omnipotent and Omniscient. Followers of all major religions believe that the God they worship is the same God for them as well as for others.

Marxism, Freudianism and other ‘non-religious’ beliefs tried to attack the roots of organized religions. But these in turn, developed into belief systems themselves. For instance, when communism was adopted by many countries of the world it was preached with the same commitment and fervor that characterizes the act of preaching and propagation of religions.

Thus religion is an integral part of human existence. The Glorious Qur’an says in the following verse:

**“Say: ‘O People of the Book! Come to common terms that is between us and you, that we worship none but Allah. If then they turn back, say: “Bear witness that we are Muslims (bowing to Allah’s Will)””.**

*(Al-Qur’an 3:64)*

The study of various religions has been an extremely rewarding experience for me. It has reaffirmed the belief that God created every human soul with some knowledge of His existence. The psychological constitution of man is such that he accepts the existence of the Creator, unless he has been conditioned to believe the contrary. In other words, belief in God requires no condition, while a rejection of God does.





## CATEGORIZATION OF MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS

Religions of the world can be broadly categorized into Semitic religions and non-Semitic religions. Non-Semitic religions can be divided into Aryan religions and non-Aryan religions.

### Semitic religions

Semitic religions are religions that originated among the Semites. According to the Bible, Prophet Noah (pbuh) had a son called Shem. The descendants of Shem are known as Semites. Therefore, Semitic religions are the religions that originated among the Jews, Arabs, Assyrians, Phoenicians, etc. Major Semitic religions are Judaism, Christianity and Islam. These religions are Prophetic religions that believe in Divine Guidance sent through prophets of God.

### Non-Semitic religions

The non-Semitic religions are further subdivided into Aryan and non-Aryan religions:

#### Aryan religions

Aryan religions are the religions that originated among the Aryans, a powerful group of Indo-European speaking people that spread through Iran and Northern India in the first half of the second Millennium BC (2000 to 1500 BC).

The Aryan religions are further subdivided into Vedic and non-Vedic religions. The Vedic religion is given the misnomer of Hinduism or Brahminism. The non-Vedic

religions are Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, etc. Almost all Aryan religions are non-Prophetic religions.

Zoroastrianism is an Aryan, non-Vedic religion, which is not associated with Hinduism. It claims to be a prophetic religion.

### Non-Aryan religions

The non-Aryan religions have diverse origins. Confucianism and Taoism are of Chinese origin while Shintoism is of Japanese origin. Many of these non-Aryan religions do not have a concept of God. They are better referred to as ethical systems rather than as religions.

### Most authentic definition of God in any religion

The concept of God espoused by a religion cannot be judged by merely observing the practice of its followers. It is quite common for the followers of many religions to be ignorant of the concept of God in their scriptures. It is therefore better to analyze the concept of God in any religion by referring to its holy scriptures.

Let us understand the concept of God in major world religions by analyzing what their scriptures have to say about it.





# Concept of God in Hinduism

The most popular among the Aryan religions is Hinduism, 'Hindu' is actually a Persian word which stands for the inhabitants of the region beyond the Indus Valley. However in common parlance Hinduism is a blanket term for an assortment of religious beliefs, most of whom are based on the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagwad Geeta.



## Common Concept of God in Hinduism:

Hinduism is commonly perceived as a polytheistic religion. Indeed, most Hindus would attest to this, by professing belief in a multitude of gods. Some Hindus believe in the systems of three gods while Some Hindus actually believe in the existence of thirty-three crore i.e. 330 million gods. However learned Hindus who are well-versed with their scriptures insist that a Hindu should believe in and worship only one God.

The major difference between the Hindu and the Muslim perception of God is the common Hindus' belief in the philosophy of Pantheism. Pantheism considers everything, living and non-living to be divine and sacred. The Hindus therefore consider the trees, the sun, the moon, the animals and even the human beings as manifestations of God. For the common Hindu, every thing is God.

Islam, on the contrary, exhorts man to consider himself and his surroundings as examples of divine creation rather than as divinity itself. Muslims therefore believe that everything is God's i.e. God with an apostrophe 's'. In other words we believe that everything belongs to God. The trees, the Sun, the Moon and everything in this Universe belong to God.

Thus the major difference between the Hindu and the Muslim beliefs is difference of the apostrophe 's'. The Hindu says everything is God. The Muslim says every thing is God's, i.e. God with an apostrophe 's'.

The Holy Qur'an says:

"Come to common terms as between us and you". The



# Concept of God in Sikhism

Sikhism is a non-Semitic, Aryan, non-Vedic religion. Though not a major religion of the world, it is a branch or offshoot of Hinduism founded by Guru Nanak at the end of the 15th Century. It originated in the area of Pakistan and North West India called Punjab meaning the land of the five rivers. Guru Nanak was born in a Kshatriya (warrior caste) of a Hindu family but was strongly influenced by Islam and Muslims.



## Definition of Sikh and Sikhism

The word 'Sikh' is derived from the word 'Sisya' meaning disciple or follower. Sikhism is a religion of 10 Gurus, the First Guru being Guru Nanak and the 10th and the last being Guru Gobind Singh. The sacred book of Sikhism is Sri Guru Granth also called Adi Granth Sahib.

## The Five - 'K's

Every Sikh is supposed to keep the five 'K's which also serve as his identity.

- (i) Kesh - uncut hair; which all the Gurus kept
- (ii) Kangha - comb; which all the Gurus kept
- (iii) Kada - metal or steel bangle; for strength and self-restraint
- (iv) Kirpan - dagger; for self defense
- (v) Kaccha - special knee length underwear or underdrawer for agility

## Mulmantra: The Fundamental Creed of Sikhism

The best definition that any Sikh can give regarding concept of God is Sikhism is quote the "Mul Mantra" - the fundamental creed of Sikhism, which occurs at the beginning of Guru Granth Sahib.

It is mentioned in Sri Guru Granth Sahib volume 1 Japuji, the first verse "There exists but one God, who is called the true the creator, free from fear and hate, immortal not begotten, self-existent, Great and Compassionate".

Sikhism enjoins on its followers strict monotheism. It



# Concept of God in Christianity

Christianity is a Semitic religion, which claims to have nearly two billion adherents all over the world. Christianity owes its name to Jesus Christ (peace be on him). Jesus (pbuh) is also a revered figure in Islam. Islam is the only non-Christian Faith that prescribed faith in Jesus (pbuh).



Before we discuss the concept of God in Christianity let us examine the position of Jesus (pbuh) in Islam:

- (i) Islam is the only non-Christian faith, which makes it an article of faith to believe in Jesus (pbuh). No Muslim is a Muslim if he does not believe in Jesus (pbuh).
- (ii) We believe that he was one of the mightiest Messengers of Allah (SWT).
- (iii) We believe that he was born miraculously without any male intervention, which many modern day Christians do not believe.
- (iv) We believe that He gave life to the dead with God's permission.
- (v) We believe that He healed those born blind, and the lepers with God's permission.

One may ask, if both Muslims and Christians love and respect Jesus (pbuh), where exactly is the parting of ways? The major differences between Islam and Christianity is the Christians' insistence on the supposed divinity of Christ. A study of the Christian scriptures reveals that Jesus (pbuh) never claimed divinity. In fact there is not a single unequivocal statement in the entire Bible where Jesus (pbuh) himself says, "I am God" or where he says, "worship me". In fact the Bible contains statements attributed to Jesus (pbuh) in which he preached quite the contrary. Consider the following statements in the Bible, attributed to Jesus Christ (pbuh):

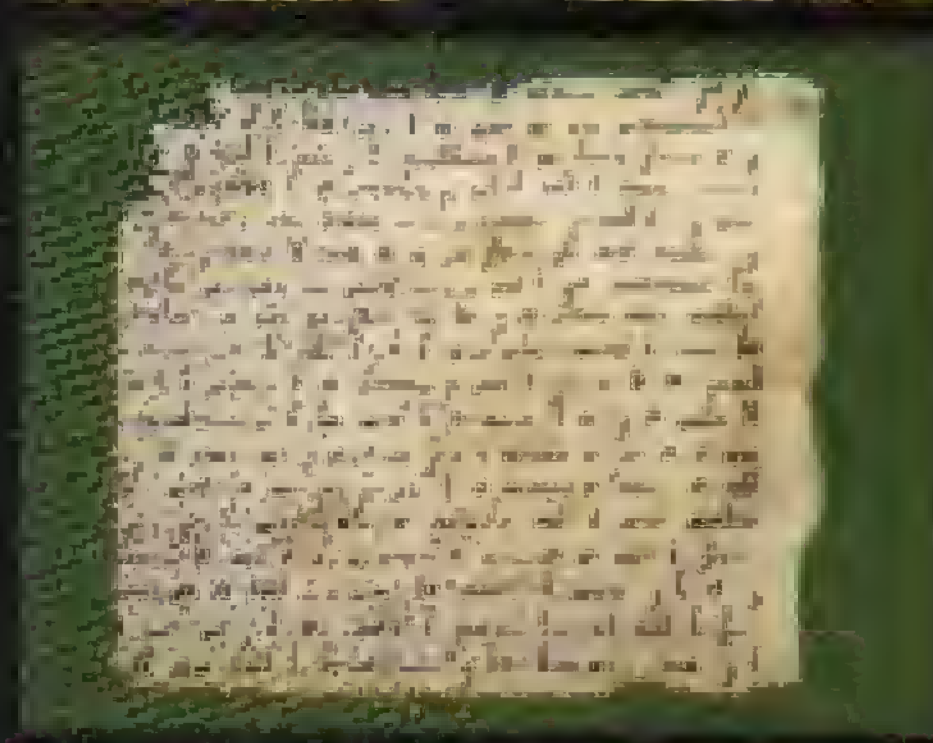
**"My Father is Greater than I"**

*(John 14:28)*



# Concept of God in Islam

Islam is a Semitic religion, which has more than 1.2 billion adherents all over the world. Islam means "submission to the will of Allah". Muslims accept the Qur'an, as the word of God revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Islam states that Allah sent messengers and prophets throughout the ages with the message of the Oneness of God, and accountability in the Hereafter. Islam thus makes it an article of faith to believe in the earlier prophets, starting with Adam, and including Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Issac, Jacob, Moses, David, John, Jesus and many others (may peace be on them all).



## The Most Concise Definition of God:

The most concise definition of God in Islam is given in four verses of Surah Ikhlas which is Chapter 112 of the Holy Qur'an:

1. "Say: He is Allah, The one and Only.
2. "Allah, the Eternal, Absolute.
3. "He begets not, nor is He begotten.
4. "And there is none like unto Him."

*(Holy Qur'an 112:1-4)*

The word 'Assamad' is difficult to translate. It means 'absolute existence', which can be attributed only to Allah, all other existence being temporal or conditional. It also means that Allah is not dependent on any person or thing but

